



House Budget and Research Office

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AMENDED FISCAL YEAR 2015 STATE BUDGET HOUSE BILL 75 HIGHLIGHTS

The original FY 2015 budget approved during the 2014 Session set spending at \$20.8 billion. House Bill 75, the Amended FY 2015 budget, recognizes \$276.1 million in additional revenue or 1.3% over the original FY 2015 budget. This brings the total appropriation for Amended FY 2015 to \$21.1 billion.

This budget exemplifies the spirit and intent of an “amended” budget as it is limited to making only the changes needed to balance within the new revenue estimate, realigning agency budgets based on need and funding the mid-term adjustment for K-12 education. Highlights of those changes include:

K-12 Education

- \$128.5 million is provided for midterm enrollment growth of 1.33%. This includes additional funds for charter system grants and State Commission Charter School supplements.
- HB 75 includes an additional \$8.2 million in Equalization funding to address a funding shortfall in FY 2016. Equalization grants provide additional funds to systems that qualify based on per student wealth rankings. Without these additional funds, grants to eligible school systems would be pro-rated.
- The budget also includes \$2.4 million for the Georgia Milestones assessment and \$370,264 in additional funds for the Governor’s Honors Program.
- The General Assembly agrees with the Governor’s recommendation to provide \$35 million to the OneGeorgia Authority to continue funding competitive grants to local school systems for broadband internet connectivity, live online instruction, and other digital education platforms for students and teachers. This is in addition to the \$25 million appropriated during the last budget cycle and brings the total investment in technology access to \$60 million over a two-year period.
- HB 75 also includes \$750,000 in new funds to support the Governor’s Education Reform Commission.

Higher Education

- The budget includes \$4.8 million for the Board of Regents to provide clinical trials on cannabidiol for children with medication resistant epilepsy.
- HB 75 provides \$647,875 to establish the Georgia Film Academy through a cooperative partnership between the University System and the Technical College System.

- HB 75 provides the Georgia Student Finance Commission with \$5.8 million for the Accel program, \$138,750 for the Engineer Scholarship, \$67,749 for the Georgia Military Scholarship, \$240,940 for the North Georgia Military Scholarship Grants, and \$362,500 for the North Georgia ROTC Grants based on projected need.

Public Safety

- HB 75 includes \$2.8 million in the Department of Corrections for education initiatives including GED Preparation Learning Centers and fast track program, a charter high school for offenders, and vocational programs.
- The budget also includes \$752,605 to lengthen the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) program in the Department of Corrections from six to nine months.
- HB 75 includes an additional \$4 million for the Public Defenders Standards Council for capital conflict and conflict cases.
- The Amended FY 2015 budget provides an additional \$2.7 million to the Office of Highway Safety to continue the implementation of Joshua's Law driver education programs per SB 231 (2013 Session). When combined with the \$2.9 million included in the FY 2015 original budget, the total funding for driver education is \$5.6 million.

Economic Development

- HB 75 contains an infusion of funds focused on economic development including \$20 million in additional funds for Regional Economic Business Assistance (REBA) grants and \$20 million for the OneGeorgia Authority for economic development projects.
- The Amended FY 2015 budget provides \$777,342 to keep the Xpress buses running through the end of the fiscal year. Xpress buses operate in 13 metro counties, but draw riders from 40 counties statewide.
- The budget recognizes \$5.59 million for additional service agreements for routine maintenance in the Department of Transportation and provides \$5.59 million in new state funds for the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank.

Health

- The Amended FY 2015 budget appropriates \$14.1 million in state funds to draw down Disproportionation Share Hospital (DSH) payments for all private deemed and non-deemed hospitals. The net effect to these hospitals is \$42.7 million in additional funds.
- The General Assembly agrees with the Governor's recommendation for the Department of Community Health to submit a study by June 30, 2015 that examines why the cost for the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) is higher than other comparable plans and to provide options for reducing costs without diminishing benefits. The General Assembly feels that non-certificated school system employees are an essential part of the education delivery system and also instructed the department to include options to provide health insurance benefits to these workers.
- HB 75 also recognizes \$187 million in the SHBP to fund future claims and Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) liabilities.

Human Services

- The budget reflects \$4.9 million in new funding for 103 additional child protective services caseworkers. This is in addition to the 175 positions that were funded in the original FY 2015 budget.
- HB 75 includes \$20,000 for the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program to address the increased cost of criminal background checks.
- HB 75 provides \$9.8 million in additional funds to address the growth in Out-of-Home Care utilization.

General Government

- The budget includes \$15 million to fund Forestland Protection Act grant reimbursements.
- HB 75 provides \$131,061 for the Secretary of State's office to fund four additional positions and operating expenses needed for the elections division.